# The Orthodox Herald

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## ARE KOLYADY CAROLS?

Kolyady are often referred to as Christmas Carols, but there is a difference. The word Kolyady is derived from ko meaning with and laude meaning praise. The content of kolyady is strictly Scriptural, telling of the story of Jesus' Birth and the circumstances surrounding it.

For example, in the well-known Boh sya razdayet/God is born we sing: "God is born, His name is Jesus, Mary is His mother. The angels are fearful, the ox is trembling. The troubled donkey pastures. Shepherds wonder as they see God in the flesh."

Another example is Nebo e Zemlya/Heaven and Earth we sing: "Heaven and earth celebrate today. Angels and people happily rejoice. Christ is born! God's flesh and blood. Angels sing, kings rejoice, shepherds play to reveal the miracle. In the stable, angels serve the newborn King and execute His Will. We, too, present our greetings and sing the praises of heaven."

Boh previchnnee/God follows the Biblical story very closely. We sing: "God, the eternal descended from heaven to comfort His people. Christ is born in Bethlehem, to all of us God is born. God's angel heralded this to the shepherds in the fields and to the earthly kings."

How about another well-lived kolyada? Vo Vefleemess/In Bethlehem "In Bethlehem there is joy. Christ the Lord to us is born. Angels are singing, shepherds kneeling, wise men are following a star because Christ is born. God fulfilled His promised word and sent the Saviour-Christ the Lord. Angels gloriously proclaim – 'Peace on earth, good will to men – For Christ is born!'"

Lastly, we will examine Nova radost

(Continued on Page 59, Col. 1)



## LOST TRADITION

It had many names depending where the immigrant parishioners came from. In some places it was called Bethlehemy, or javorniky, or Vertipy, but they all had the same goal to bring the story of Christ's Birth to the homes of the faithful. They did not just carol. They wore costumes and usually performed a skit, sang Kolyady, and brought greetings and good wishes to the family. Many times the good wishes were given with a touch of humor. In many homes where there were young men, they disappeared right after the Holy Night Supper to go to the parish hall to join the group, which would start out on their rounds. In a way, it was a rite of passage for a young man to be old enough to join the group. They carried a star and often a replica of a church or the manger. Pictured above is a group in Belarus. The photo is captioned: "Masked villagers sing Christmas carols in Lepel, Belarus on January 7."

## ST. IGNATIUS

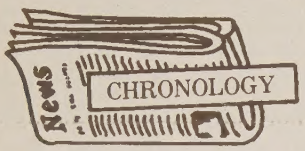
Because the tradition in the Orthodox Church goes back very far, we can find information which we cannot find in the Scriptures. For example, we learn that Fotini was the name of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7). But who was the child that was placed on Christ's lap in Matthew 18:1-6? Legend has it that it was St. Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred in the year 107. He was a disciple of either SS. Peter, Paul or John and became the 2nd bishop of the great center of Christianity in Antioch in Syria.

However, he is best known for seven letters which he wrote on his way to Rome where he was to be thrown to wild beasts at the public "games." His guards and he stopped in Smyrna where he was met by St. Polycarp, who was at that time a young man. Here this aged man wrote the first four letters to the Christians at Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles and Rome. When the entourage continued on its way, they again stopped at Lystra just before it crossed into Europe from Asia. Here St. Ignatius wrote three more letters, this time to the Christians at Philadelphia and Smyrna, and a farewell letter of advice to Bishop Polycarp.

These letters are of the greatest value for the light they throw on Christian belief and practice less than a century after Christ's Ascension. Here is what he wrote to the Ephesians about the Birth of Jesus. "For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary, in God's plan being sprung from both the seed of David and from the Holy Spirit. He was born and baptized that by His passion He might sanctify water ... I have only touched upon this plan in reference to

(Continued on Page 59, Col. 1)

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DECEMBER 2007

A CONFERENCE on "Problems, experimental development and preservation of Russian culture and language in America" will be held in Washington, DC on December 8-9. For info go to: http:www.russiandc.com/bews.html?id=1704

THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES of Russia, Jerusalem, Serbia, Georgia and Mt. Athos follow the Julian calendar. Interfax reported that this makes up 80% of the world Orthodox community.

THE 10TH MEETING OF THE JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church was held in Ravenna, Italy from Oct. 8-14. The commission has been working on the theme of "The Ecclesiological and Canonical Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority in the Church. "The Russian Orthodox delegation withdrew from the meeting because of disagreement with the Ecumenical Patriarch over the inclusion of the Estonian Orthodox Church.

ARCHBISHOP TYKHON OF OMSK AND SIBERIA of the Rusyn True Orthodox Church (RTOC) visited centers of the church in Kiev, Odessa, Vinnytsia and Kharkov. He was appointed administrator of the Odessa-Kharkov Eparchy by the Synod of the Rusyn True Orthodox Church.

MAKING A PILGRIMAGE TO MOUNT ATHOS were Metropolita Vladimir of Kiev and President Viktor Yuschenko of Ukrainia. They visited St. Panteleimon Monastery where Yuschenko had his confession heard and received Holy Communion.

MEDINFORUS has been developed by a group of medical librarians from New York City with the goal of helping Russian-speaking audience to search the internet for medical information, bringing together a collection of links to medical websites, electronic publications, directories, and other resources available online in Russian. The collection includes sources both from Russia and other countries.

HOLY CROSS MONASTERY in Niagara Falls, NY has reached its goal of operating a pierogie manufacturing factory. They make many different fillings and ship them all over the U.S. They hope to receive many orders for Holy Night Supper so that they can proceed on their next project – to finish the main building to be able to accommodate a monastic community in the near future. To order and for info go to web sites: www.monks-pierogies.com or www.holycross-niagarafalls.org.

IT IS A MORAL OBLIGATION to provide food and water to patients in a vegetative state, according to a document approved by Pope Benedict XVI. It reaffirms Pope John Paul II's speech made in 2004 "when he said nutrition and hydration, even by 'artificial' means such as feeding tubes, should generally be considered ordinary care and not extraordinary medical treatment."

MANY WATCHED THE CENTENNIAL LITURGY on EWTN on September 30 from the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in Philadelphia, PA. It is available for $30 from Byzantine Rite Church Supplies, 812 N. Franklin St., Philadelphia, PA 19123. It is on DVD. For info: phone 215/627-0660 or supplies@ukrarchep-archy.us

IN A RECENT SURVEY it was revealed that 83 percent of teens maintain that moral truths depend on the circumstances, and only 6 percent believe that moral truth is absolute. For websites about the Orthodox faith go to www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith

PROJECT MEXICO held its first Orthodox Basic Training Week the week of July 17. Participating were 135 volunteers from 8 states, 15 parishes and 5 Orthodox jurisdictions. They worked during the day and listened to Orthodox speakers in the evenings.

THERE IS A GROWING ARMY of Protestant pastors who are "entertainment weary." They feel that the mile-wide and inch-deep church growth movement of today, with its overemphasis on trendy music and pseudoevangelism, will be read in church history books as a failed attempt to win the world to Christ by conforming Christianity to the world. They stress that the Acts model for church growth will be the real "emerging church" in the 21st century.

ACCORDING TO A COLUMN in www.ReligionAndSpirituality.com, today's grandparents are becoming the most stable feature of today's fractured family life – a reservoir and conduit for family values.

THE 18TH CENTURY CATHEDRAL OF THE DORMITION in Budapest, Hungary is being restored. The work is being funded by the Hungarian government. The Serbian Church had jurisdiction over the cathedral until 1949, when it was transferred to the Moscow Patriarchate. A new diocese was created in 2000. The Ecumenical Patriarchate has laid claim to ownership of the cathedral and the case is now in Hungary's Arbitration Court. President Putin visited Hungary recently and returned 134 volumes taken from the Calvinist college in Sarospatak by the Soviet Army as booty during WW II.

(Continued from front page)
## ARE KOLYADY CAROLS?

stala/A new joy has come. "A new Joy has come. A star brighter than ever shines over the stable where Christ, born of the Virgin, lies swaddled as an ordinary human. Angels sing praises and proclaim – Peace in heaven and on earth."

Upon analysis of the words of the kolyady, it can be seen that they served a purpose of teaching about Christ and the hope that His Birth brought.

The custom of kolyady singers, or as we now say carolers, being welcomed into the home was meant not only to bring cheer or the Christmas spirit but the message heard at the church.

Those who have gone to homes with the kolyady know that there is always that reflective few moments after the singing stops that small pause in those who have heard the message of the kolyady – the awesome story of the Birth of Christ.

Isn't it sad that in this day when many hours are spent listening to so-called Christmas songs and programs, neither of which mention the Birth of Christ, or worst yet, are comedic in nature, that so few parishes bring the message of His Birth to the homes via kolyady?

(Continued from front page)
## ST. IGNATIUS

the New Man, Jesus Christ, and how it involves believing in Him and loving Him, and entails His passion and Resurrection,...and (He) is the Son of Man and the Son of God."

We can see how much church teaching he put in to a few words in his letter to the Trallians. "Jesus Christ, of David's lineage, of Mary; who was really born, ate, and drank; was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate; was really crucified and died, in the sight of heaven and earth and the underworld (Phil 2:8-10). He was really raised from the dead for His Father raised Him (Acts 2:24), just as His Father will raise us who believe in Him, through Christ Jesus, apart from Whom we have no genuine life."

He wrote a letter to the Symrnaeans after his stay in that city when he was on his trek to Rome to be fed to the lions. "Regarding our Lord, you are absolutely convinced that on the human side He was really sprung from David's line (Romans 1:3), Son of God according to God's will and power, really born of a virgin, baptized by John, so that 'all righteousness might be fulfilled by Him' (Matthew 3:15), and really crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch – we are part of the fruit that grew out of His most blessed passion. And thus by His Resurrection, He raised a standard (Isaiah 5:26;11:12) to rally His saints and faithful forever, whether Jews or Gentiles, into one body of His church (Ephesians 2:16)."

How much influence did the incident in Matthew 18:1-6 have on St. Ignatius' life? Enough for him to become such a believer that he was willing to meet a most horrid death for this belief?

GOING BACK

Two Sundays before Christmas, we are put on the alert that the big day of Christmas is very near. We celebrate our forefather who served God in the Old Testament dispensation, taking part in the preparation of the world to receive its own Creator into itself as a little Child.

From Adam to St. John the Baptist, the hymns and prayers of the day praise the numerous individuals who, throughout the history of God's dealing with His people, performed heroic feats in His service.

The Monk of the Eastern Church in **The Year of Grace of the Lord** points out the foreshadowing of new things in the old stories: "In Abel the first martyr, and the prototype of the Good Shepherd as well as the Sacrificer; in Melchisedek the type of the eternal priest; in Abraham the spirit of faith and the type of the Father; in Isaac the spirit of sonship and of sacrifice, in Jacob the free election, patient service and conversion; in Joseph the great features of the Passion and of Christ's redemptive work ... through the reading of the Prophets the voice of Jesus Himself speaks to our hearts."

In many of the services of the Church, for example in Sunday Matins they turn up regularly but even more on this the Sunday of the Forefathers we hear about the three young men in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:8-30). Why? The three men are a reminder of the angels who visited Abraham (Genesis 18:1-12), as a symbol of the trinity and the furnace is reminiscent of the burning bush of Moses (Exodus 3:1-3), in turn a typological foreshadowing of the virgin womb that can hold the living God and yet not be destroyed. "Thy young men, O Christ, when they were in the furnace which to them like dew, mysteriously figure Thy Birth from the Virgin, which has illumined us without burning us."

Here we have a hint of the Feast of the Nativity/Christmas soon to come.

The hymns for Matins on the Sunday of the forefathers recognize the heroes and Prophets of the Old Testament; "You shone as heaven's lights upon the earth, enkindling the light of piety."

The verse continues: "You called forth the choir of all creation as you sang to the Master."

We should look for help to these heroic Forefathers, who have trod the path before us. We need to slay giants as did David when we face great trials in our lives. We need to obey like Noah; endure like Job; dance like Miriam or fast and pray like Esther. Their aid can be ours for the asking; their stories our illumination whenever we choose to open the Book of Books.

(Continued from page 63)
## KITCHEN CORNER

salt and pepper. Mix well. Then add mushrooms with liquid. Cook a few minutes longer on low heat.

For thinner machanka, add more liquid.

This recipe was given to me by a baba, who said that her grandchildren liked it because it had tomatoes in it. She adapted it from a traditional recipe.

## SOBORNOST

### The Faith Once For All

According to the view of *sobornost,* the council is the "supreme authority" in the Church, which under the guidance of the Holy Spirit authoritatively formulates doctrinal statements and disciplinary decisions. Genuine councils, summoned with this notion in mind, did not think of themselves as revealing any new truth, but simply as setting forth "the faith once and for all" already entrusted to the Church.

There was never any suggestion that Truth was the result of the partial or complete consensus achieved among council delegates themselves. The ruling concern in *sobornost* is to reach agreement with the Truth transmitted through the centuries from the very beginning. From this, not the least departure is permissible. This is why in all conciliar documents we find such phrases as: "following previous synods", "continuing their deliberations", "in conformity with them."

The infallible origin of the decrees promulgated by the fathers, under the guidance of the Spirit, to help the spiritual advancement of the Body of Christ, is shown by the warnings with which the conciliar decrees conclude and by the frequent reference to that very guidance of the Paraclete (Holy Spirit).

Conciliar decisions vary in their binding force, depending on whether they deal with the unchanging dogma or the changing ethos. The esteem in which the conscience of the Church held the various synods finds expression in the words of the Emperor Justinian:

We honor the doctrinal decrees of the first four Councils as we do the Holy Scripture, but the canons given or approved by them as we do the laws.

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Everyone should sweep before his own door.

## THE BABY FOREVER?

At this time of year, we tend to emphasize Christ as a baby. It is natural as we celebrate His Birth this month and are preparing for it as part of our Advent discipline. But when Christmas/His Nativity is over, do we forget Him entirely or do we keep Him in our minds as a little child in a manger or something else?

We do have a Creed, which we recite, in which we declare what we believe. It includes the most important truths of our faith as taught in the Gospels, including the teachings about the Son of God. These are to be found in the 2nd and 7th articles of the Nicene Creed.

They read as follows:

Article 2 = (I believe) in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, True God of True God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made;

3 = Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.

4 = And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried.

5 = And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;

6 = And ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father;

7 = And He shall come again with glory to judge the Living and the dead; and Whose Kingdom shall have no end.

<u>Where can we find these in the Gospels?</u>

| | |
|---|---|
| In one Lord Jesus Christ | 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:5-6 |
| the Son of God | Matt 14:33,16:16 |
| the only begotten | John 3:16 |
| begotten of the Father before all ages | John 1:14;17:5 |
| Light of Light | Ps 27:1; John 8:12; 1 John 1:5 |
| True God of True God | John 17:1-5 |
| begotten not made | |
| Of one essence with the Father | John 10:30; 14:10 |
| by Whom all things were made | John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:1-2 |
| Who for us men and for our salvation | Luke 2:30;19:10; 1 Tim 4-5 |
| came down from heaven | John 6:33,35,50; Phil 2:7 |
| and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary | Matt 1:23; Luke 1:35 |
| and became man | John 1:14; 1 John 4:2 |
| And He was crucified for us | Mark 15:25; John 19:16; 1 Cor 15:33; Phil 2:8 |
| under Pontius Pilate | Matt 27:24-27; Luke 23:24 |
| and suffered | Mark 8:31; Phil 2:8; Heb 9:28 |
| and was buried | Luke 23:53;1 Cor 15:4 |
| And the third day He rose again | Luke 24:46; 1 Cor 15:4 |
| according to the Scriptures | 1 Cor 15:3 |
| And ascended into heaven | Luke 24:51; Acts 1:10 |
| and sits at the right hand of the Father | Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55 |
| And He shall come again with glory | Matt 24:27; 1 Thess 4:16-17; Rev 1:7 |
| to judge the living and the dead | Acts 10:42; Rom 2:16 |
| and Whose Kingdom shall have no end | Luke 1:33; Heb 13:8; 2 Pet 1:11 |

## WINTER'S GRACE

The desire for the approval of others makes us do strange things. We wear clothing that is fashionable whether we like it or not or whether it is appropriate. We accept invitations we would rather decline especially in the Lenten Seasons of the Church, and we work much harder than we want to for a level of financial success we really don't need. Most regrettably we may follow a crowd that encourages us to do what we know is wrong.

People pressure – we are all influenced by it to varying degrees. It bears down on us from all directions. But we can choose the path we will take. If we are swayed by the proud or by those who love money, live for pleasure, or long for power, people pressure will lead us down the path that ends in destruction. But if we heed the counsel of those who are humble, good and godly, we will follow the way that pleases God.

"Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Proverbs 16:19

* * * * * *

Abstain from all appearance of evil.

# Memories

Something special happened at my family home in Pennsylvania some 80 years ago. We had a wonderful Christmas dinner that day. Mom had prepared many of the dishes the day before.

Grace was said, thanking the Lord for all the good things, and we especially gave our love to the new-born Christ. At the beginning of the meal, Mom's favorite chicken soup was served. Oh, what a wonderful, specially prepared soup it was! Pop had taken good care of the chicken for some time because it was to be on the Christmas table. Then we ate. After the meal was completed, Pop said a little prayer and then he said: "Let's go into the living room. Margaret can play the piano, and we can sing some Christmas carols." Little Lenny was running about. He was only about 5 years old and did not know all the Christmas carols yet. During the caroling there was a knock on the door. Pop answered the door and found a man bundled up in one of those heavy, tan, World War I soldier overcoats. He had on a furry Russian hat and carried a long stick.

"If you please, I am hungry. I sure would like something to eat," he said.

Mom was elated. Some could extend her cooking to yet another person. The man took off his hat, shook off a bit of the snow and put the hat on top of the piano. He put his stick in the corner by the radiator and Elizabeth took his overcoat.

Mom led the nice man into the kitchen. She put him in the chair at the head of the table where Pop always sat.

Keep in mind that Pop had ordered everyone to leave the man alone. But I was marching back and forth from the kitchen to the living room and Pop did not give me any quarrel, being that I was a little guy.

Mom gave the old man a bowl of chicken soup and told him to help himself to our leftovers, which were still on the table. Then, Mom returned to the caroling in the living room. I was in the kitchen and saw the old man take one of mom's tea towels – a bleached out Pillsbury flour sack – and wrap it around his neck like a bib. I thought to myself, he must really be someone special because he is using a great big napkin.

Then he began to eat. After the soup, he ate all of the kielbasa and mashed potatoes. Then he refilled his dinner plate with all the ham, all the peas, and all the sweet potatoes. The man continued to eat, and lo and behold, it was almost impossible to understand how one old man would be able to eat all of that food.

I, little Lenny, watched the man after he finished eating. He took off his bib and folded it nicely. He came into the living room and said "Mom, that sure was a good meal. Thank you very much." Pop helped him put on his coat. The old man said: "Thank you," got his stick and started walking out the doorway. He turned, bade everyone a Holy and Merry Christmas, and walked out into the windy snow.

As he was walking away, Pop happened to notice that he had left his hat on the piano. Roman ran into the snowy wind, carrying the hat to give to the man. But after a few seconds, Roman returned and said: "Pop, I cannot find the man!"

Pop said: "Give me that hat," and ran outside. Pop also returned with the old man's hat still in his hand. Pop said: "Mom, I followed his footsteps in the snow down to the railroad track, where the footprints stopped. I looked around – I looked to the right, I could not see him. I looked to the left, and I still could not see him." Pop put the old man's hat on the piano.

Mom looked at Pop and her eyes welled up with tears. Pop hugged Mom, both realizing their guest was an extraordinary visitor.

Our Christmas visitor never returned. What about the hat, one might ask? The hat was on the piano for a week or two. Ultimately, it got a resting place on a hook in the cellar. Through the decades, it slowly faded. What has not faded is the memory and belief that someone special was a guest in our home some 80 years ago.

R Leonard Z

Please send your MEMORIES to Margaret Pysarchyk, 2125 Garfield St., Lorain OH 44055 or email her at mypysarchyk@hotmail.com

## I WONDERED

We may well ask, if Joseph was not the father of Jesus, why is his family tree in the scripture and not St. Mary's? I heard it read on the Sunday before Christmas in Matthew 1:1-25 and found it confusing. Get out your Bible and turn to Matthew. You will find that the first 17 verses tell you exhaustively about Joseph's genealogy, and then Matthew immediately goes on to describe how Jesus was born of a virgin – and not related to Joseph at all. Why did Matthew do this? We must remember that Matthew was writing his gospel for the Jews, to show them that Jesus was the Messiah. And so he wanted to establish Jesus' legal genealogy – which was very important to the Jews.

Legally, Jesus belonged to Joseph's family and Matthew was saying that His was a "pure" line as it stretched all the way back to the royal family of David. Women's genealogies were not viewed as of the same importance; therefore, the seemingly lack of interest in Mary's family.

As for Jesus' actual (though not legal) father, that was God for He was "conceived of the Holy Spirit." Nowhere in the Bible is Joseph referred to as "the father of Jesus," despite the numerous references to Mary as "the mother of Jesus."

## LIGHTER MOMENT

A little boy opened the family Bible with fascination, looking at the old pages as he carefully turned them. Then something fell out. He picked it up and examined it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed in between the pages long ago.

"Mama, look what I found!" the boy called out.

"What have you got there, dear?" she asked.

With astonishment in his voice, he answered, "It's Adam's suit!"

## ST. NICHOLAS DAY

Many people consider St. Nicholas Day just a time of gift-giving for children, but I have fond memories of one holy day that was much more and very special to me.

I had just turned eighteen and was in my first year as a church school teacher. That year, St. Nicholas Day fell on a Sunday (December 19), and a program was planned by the parish children. Since I was a teacher, I was asked to help with the Saturday afternoon practices. The enthusiasm of my students was contagious, and I became excited for them as the day approached.

On the evening of the program, the children gathered in the church kitchen giggling and nervous and certain they would forget their lines. When the play began, I stayed behind to help with last-minute details with costumes and props. As I entered the hall, I got a wonderful surprise. I expected to see the parents and just a few parishioners but was amazed to see a full hall with almost the entire parish present. What touched me the most, though, were all the babas. Although some of these ladies didn't have grandchildren participating or even in our church, they were right there cheering on the parish children. From all the smiles, it was easy to see that they were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

As St. Nicholas made his appearance and passed out treats to the young and young at heart, a light snow began to fall outside and seemed to add the festive spirit within. That night, St. Nicholas Day wasn't just for the children; instead, the little ones became the "gift givers" in our church, and I felt truly blessed to be a part of this parish family.

## THE NATIVITY FAST

During the 12th century, the Nativity Fast was set at 40 days. However, a highly developed liturgical structure never was developed for it had been the case of the Great Lent before Easter/Pascha. Neither is this Fast as strict. Little mention of it is made of it until the Sunday of the Ancestors which comes two Sundays before Christmas.

However, it is not completely neglected. On Nov. 21/Dec. 4 on the Holy Day of the Presentation of the Mother of God into the Temple "Christ is born! Glorify Him!" is sung. References are also made on St. Nicholas Day on December 6/19 when there are direct references made about the coming of Christ in the cave.

With the secular preparations for the day beginning sooner and sooner, the overwhelming commercialism, the glaring, gaudy decorations in malls and homes, the tale of Santa Claus pushed to the absurd, and a debauchery of food, parties, and gifts, it is only fitting that we adhere to the traditional fast to put a proper perspective on the Nativity and what the Birth of Christ really means.

## MOTHER TERESA

Doubt plays an important role in religion. Doubt is inevitable when one approaches religion in its higher form, touching on the unfathomable and experiencing the ineffable. Many religious seekers experience and write about struggles with doubt and with periods in which God seems to withdraw from them: the so-called "dark night of the soul."

Recently with the imprudent disclosure of her private confessional thoughts, the doubts and struggles of the twentieth-century Roman Catholic nun, Mother Teresa, who dedicated her life to the care of the world's poor and downtrodden, have been made public. This laudable woman's spiritual development, in which superficial and untrained observers find disbelief and atheism (Quite predictably, with high-sounding simple-mindedness, Christopher Hitchens, who wrote The God Delusion, attributes her struggles to the supposed "cognitive dissonance of a doubting believer"), is an example of the process by which uncertainty and natural human queries weigh heavily on the mind, as the soul grows and achieves cleansing and enlightenment. Atheism is not a part of this psychological process, rather, one experiences a sense of abandonment and spiritual emptiness that eventually gives way to noetic insight. Reflection and disquiet are part of this process, as is doubt – albeit a doubt of a constructive and spiritual kind. In any event, unquestioned faith is not a product of an unthinking, witless act of belief, as Dawkins would have us believe.

Archbishop Chrysostom
in Orthodox Tradition

## *Undique (from everywhere)*

After St. Andrew of Caesarea wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelations, it was accepted into the canon of the New Testament in the Greek, Slavic, Georgian and Armenian Orthodox Churches.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). What are swaddling clothes? It is a cloth on which infants were laid. The baby was laid crosswise on a square piece of cloth and two corners were turned over its body, one over its feet, and one under its head. The whole was fastened by long strips of cloth, keeping the baby warm, snug and secure. Many cultures still practice swaddling.

We say the word "holy" 151 times during the Divine Liturgy.

In Isaiah 6 we read about the vision of the Prophet Isaiah. The Divine Liturgy we attend is in fact a "copy" of the one that happens in heaven. We use incense (Isaiah 6:4), we sing with the angels "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." (Is 6:3) and we read of the Mystery of the Eucharist in Is. 6:6. As to our ikons, God instructed Moses to use images in worship in Exodus 25, 26. God tells Moses to carve images of Cherubims into the designs of the ark and tabernacle.

The Slavic people are not the only ones who have a special supper on Christmas Eve. The Italians have the "Feast of the Seven Fishes" on La Vigilia. Most families follow the same menu year after year. It is a meatless supper with all extended family members attending.

The Nativity of our Lord/Christmas is a time when we greet each other with the joyous words: "Christ is Born!" We reply heartedly "Indeed, He is Born!" By greeting each other this way we confirm our belief that Christ willed to be born in Bethlehem. We also pass on God's peace to our fellow Christians.

Salome visited the Mother and Child on the day after His birth. In certain parts of Russia, the day was called Salome or Salomened in her honor, because she was the first one to hold the newborn Christ Child. Her story is included in Chapter 14 of the Protevangelion, an apocryphal book which was written by St. James the Lesser.

## BE WATCHFUL

There was a king who had a wicked son. Having no hope that he would change for the better, the father condemned the son to death. He gave him a month to prepare.

The month went by, and the father summoned the son. To his surprise he saw that the young man was noticeably changed: his face was thin and drawn, and his whole body looked as if it had suffered.

"How is it that such a transformation has come over you, my son?" the father asked.

"My father and my lord," replied the son, "how could I not change when each passing day brought me closer to death?"

"Good, my son," remarked the king. "Since you have evidently come to your senses, I shall pardon you. However, you must maintain this vigilant disposition of soul for the rest of your life."

"Father," replied the son, "that's impossible. How can I withstand the countless seductions and temptations?"

Then the king ordered that a vessel be brought, full of oil, and he told his son: "Take this vessel and carry it along all the streets of the city. Following you will be two soldiers with sharp swords. If you spill so much as a single drop they will cut off your head."

The son obeyed. With light, careful steps, he walked along all the streets, the soldiers accompanying him, and he did not spill a drop.

When he returned to the castle, the father asked, "My son, what did you see as you were walking through the city?"

"I saw nothing."

"What do you mean, 'nothing'?" said the king.

"Today is a holiday; you must have seen the booths with all kinds of trinkets, many carriages, people, animals…"

"I didn't notice any of that," said the son. "All my attention was focused on the oil in the vessel. I was afraid to spill a drop and thereby lose my life."

"Quite right, my son," said the king. "Keep this lesson in mind for the rest of your life. Be as vigilant over your soul as you were today over the oil in the vessel. Turn your thoughts away from what will soon pass away, and keep them focused on what is eternal. You will be followed not by armed soldiers but by death to which we are brought closer by every day. Be very careful to guard your soul from all ruinous temptations."

## A LEGEND

Do you know the legend of the Cherokee Indian youth's rite of passage? His father takes him into the forest, blindfolds him and leaves him alone. He is required to sit on a stump the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shine through it. He cannot cry out for help to anyone. Once he survives the night, he is a MAN. He cannot tell the other boys of this experience, because each lad must come into manhood on his own. The boy is naturally terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. Maybe even some human might do him harm. The wind blew the grass and earth, and shook his stump, but he sat stoically, never removing the blindfold. It would be the only way he could become a man! Finally, after a horrific night the sun appeared and he removed his blindfold. It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him. He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm. We, too, are never alone. Even when we don't know it, our Heavenly Father is watching over us, sitting on the stump beside us. When trouble comes, all we have to do is reach out to Him. If you liked this story, pass it on. If not, you took off your blindfold before dawn… Work for the Lord – the pay isn't much but the retirement is out of this world!

Sent in by Anita Anderson

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Words once spoken cannot be wiped out with a sponge.




Last year, I gave you a whole page of recipes which were traditionally served for the special Christmas Eve Supper. Here are a few more recipes to add to your file.

**FISH BALLS**

1 lb. fish fillets
1/4 cup water
2 Tbls. chopped onion
2 Tbls. oil
2 tsp. chopped parsley
1/4 cup lemon juice
1 cup cooked rice
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper

Grind the fillets. Fry the onions in the oil until tender and combine with the ground fish. Add rice, water, lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste. Mix thoroughly. Shape the mixture into small balls with wet hands and then roll in bread crumbs. Fry in hot oil until delicately brown and cooked through.

**MACHANKA**

(thick mushroom soup)

You may use canned, fresh or dried mushrooms.

Canned mushrooms: Put mushrooms with juice in a saucepan. Heat, then proceed as directed below. (The amount of mushrooms you use depends on your preference.)

Fresh mushrooms: Cut up mushrooms. Place in saucepan. Add water to cover. Cook.

Dried mushrooms: Wash. Soak overnight. Cook next day in salted water until done (about 2 hours).

FOR THE MACHANKA:

4 Tbls. flour
4 Tbls. oil
salt and pepper, to taste
1 (16 oz.) can tomatoes

In a large skillet, heat oil. Add flour gradually and stir constantly until browned. Be careful not to burn or it will be bitter. Add mashed tomatoes,

(Continued on Page 59, Col. 3)

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## A CHRISTMAS STORY

One cold evening just before Christmas, a six-year-old boy was standing out in front of a store window. He had no shoes and his clothes were mere rags. A young woman passing by saw the little boy and read the longing in his pale blue eyes. She took him by the hand and led him into the store. There, she bought him new shoes and a complete suit of warm clothing.

When they returned to the street the woman said to the little boy, "Now you can go home and have a very happy holiday."

The little boy looked up at her and asked, "Are you God, Ma'am?"

She smiled down at him and replied, "No, son, I'm just one of his children."

"I knew you had to be some relation," he said.

We are all related in some way – not only to God, but to each other. Blessed are those who recognize the needs of others and fill them with a simple effort of love and compassion.

Love is a miracle! It can come to any of us at any age, at any time and in any place. All we have to do is reach out and touch someone.

## A LIGHTER MOMENT

A Sunday School teacher was telling her beginners about the custom of changing the covers in the church with the seasons. She asked: "Does anyone know why?"

One little boy excitedly declared: "That's because it's the season of Advil."

## *Home Bible Reading Schedule*

### DECEMBER 2007

1. Luke 12:12-40 Ananius
**2. Luke 18:35-43 Jesse**
3. Luke 20:27-44 Gabriel
4. Luke 21:12-19 Barbara
5. Luke 21:5-7,10-11,20-24 Sava
6. Luke 21:28-33 Nicholas
7. Luke 21:37-22:8 Neal
8. Luke 13:18-29 Caesar
**9. Luke 17:12-19 Anna**
10. Mark 8:11-21 Hermogen
11. Mark 8:22-26 Daniel
12. Mark 8:30-34 Odilia
13. Mark 9:10-16 Eugene
14. Mark 9:33-41 Lucas
15. Luke 14:1-11 Susanna
**16. Luke 18:18-27 Domna**
17. Mark 9:42-10:1 Paisius
18. Mark 10:2-12 Floras
19. Mark 10:11-16 Elias
20. Mark 10:17-27 Ignaty
21. Mark 10:23-32 Juliana
22. Luke 16:10-15 Anastasia
**23. Luke 18:35-43 Nahum**
24. Mark 10:46-52 Claudia
25. Mark 11:11-23 Jonah
26. Mark 11:23-26 Issac
27. Mark 11:27-33 Maurice
28. Mark 12:1-12 Cornelius
29. Matt 12:15-21 Thaddeus
**30. Luke 19:1-10 Anysia**
31. Mark 12:13-17 Melanie

## BIBLE STUDY

Many of the readings in November and December are taken from the Gospel according to St. Luke. St. Luke was a Greek writing for Greeks. He was anxious to describe the progress of the Christian missionary adventure. He is quite systematic and writes his material so as to indicate a geographic progression. The Gospel is first announced in Galilee, the neighboring district of the Lake of Gennesaret, and the Decapolis. He shows Jesus and His disciples ascending to Jerusalem after their ministry in Galilee, for it is in Jerusalem that most will happen: the Cross, the Tomb, and the Resurrection. It is essentially the report of a traveler.

The Gospel of St. Luke is read from the 18th to the 24th Sunday after Pentecost. It is the most complete gospel of all four. His express purpose was to set forth his history "in order." He so stated in 1:1: "to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us" and he gives the fullest account both of the Birth of our Lord and also of His Ascension.

He wrote his gospel after St. Matthew and St. Mark wrote theirs. It was written before the Book of Acts, which he also wrote because he refers to it: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."

There are special plates with emblems of the four evangelists on the Gospel residing on the altar table. The emblem (Rev. 4:7) of St. Luke is thought to be represented by the winged ox or calf because his gospel describes the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus appears in his gospel as the great High Priest, winning by His great sacrifice, mercy and pardon for sinners.

* * * * * *

None are so fond of secrets as those who don't intend to keep them.